

Amendments to the Specification:

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 3 line 10 with the following amended paragraph:

By way of example, the structure of the various known carrier assemblies and their corresponding connecting portions may differ significantly. Common to a majority of such carrier assemblies and connecting portions is the ability of the connecting portion to be removably secured to an upper supporting end of a corresponding one of the louvers to which it is intended to be connected. Removable attachment between the connecting portion and the louver is provided to facilitate an effective connection there between while allowing quick and easy removal of individual ones of the louvers for repair or replacement. However, one disadvantage associated with the conventional manner of interconnecting the upper end of the louver to the connecting portion is the tendency for the louvers to become easily detached therefrom. Such undesirable detachment is particularly prevalent when the collection of louvers or blinds are forced along the length of the track and header assembly in a brisk manner, while a user simultaneously attempts to change the tilted or slanted orientation thereof.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 5 line 11 with the following amended paragraph:

The present invention relates to an assembly structured to maintain a secure attachment between individual louvers, blinds, vanes, etc. and corresponding carrier assemblies associated with a vertical blind assembly. The term louver as repeatedly referred to herein is meant to be representative of any of a large category of vertically oriented and suspended flats, vanes, blinds or like members of the type typically associated with a vertical blind assembly. In addition, the retaining assembly of the present invention is not intended to be limited to the secure interconnection and support of the individual louvers, but may also be utilized to secure the interconnection and support of curtain structures and/or components thereof. Therefore, when the structural and operative components of the retaining assembly of the present invention ~~[[is]]~~ are described with reference to the support of individual louvers to the connecting portion of a carrier assembly, the same structural and operative components may be utilized to support an appropriately structured curtain assembly, without departing

from the intended spirit and scope of the present invention.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 6 line 5 with the following amended paragraph:

Therefore, the retainer assembly of the present invention comprises a support portion, preferably in the form of an elongated support plate mounted on or connected to an upper most end of a louver. As such, the support plate may be considered a component of the louver and/or an independent structure therefrom. In either case the support plate, rather than the remaining structure of the louver, is considered a part of the present invention. Also, interconnection between the support plate and the remainder of the louver will be dependent on the overall structure of the louver itself. By way of example only, the louver may comprise a plurality of decorative chain links comprising independent strands or lengths having one end movably or fixedly secured to the support plate and depending therefrom in a suspended orientation. Individual strands may be connected or separated from one another and may be formed from a variety of different materials.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 7 line 1 with the following amended paragraph:

Other structural features of the support plate include an outwardly extending finger or protruding nub integrally or otherwise fixedly secured to an upper periphery of the support plate to facilitate engagement with the aforementioned depending connecting portion of an associated carrier assembly. Moreover, the outwardly extending finger has a mounting aperture formed therein such that a supporting hook or other equivalent structure typically found on various types of connecting portions at least partially passes there through and thereby facilitates connection to the support plate. Again, in many instances it is desirable to structure the connecting portion to facilitate a removable connection of the individual louvers thereto. However, as emphasized above, the ability to removably connect the individual louvers to the respective connecting portions also results in an increased possibility of inadvertent ~~attachment~~ detachment of the louvers from the connecting portion.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 8 line 19

with the following amended paragraph:

An interior surface is formed within the open interior of the clip and includes spaced apart retaining surface segments. The surface segments are substantially opposed relative to one another and ~~[[as]]~~ overly and/or engage opposite sides of the outwardly extending finger as well as the mounting aperture formed therein. In addition, at least a portion of the interior surface is configured to receive and securely engage an exposed part of the connecting portion. More specifically, in at least one preferred embodiment of the present invention, the configuration of at least one of the surface segments includes a recessed portion disposed, dimensioned and configured to at least partially receive an exterior part of the connecting portion. The recessed configuration of the surface segment thereby serves to at least partially "capture" or retain a corresponding exterior part of the connecting portion therein. Inadvertent lateral or other directional displacement of the retaining clip from its clamping engagement with the connecting portion of the carrier assembly is thereby prevented or significantly restricted.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 10 line 18 with the following amended paragraph:

Figure 5 is an end view showing an access opening of the embodiment of Figures 3 and 4.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 10 line 22 with the following amended paragraph:

Figure 7 is a rear ~~plane~~ view of the support plate of the present invention.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 14 line 11 with the following amended paragraph:

Also, with primary reference to Figures 1 and 2 the structure of the remainder of the louver 10, as distinguished from the support plate 14, comprises a plurality of elongated linked chains or strands 18 wherein each of the individual links 20 are movably secured to next adjacent links of a respective strand or length 18. Further, the upper most end links as at 20' are each secured to a lower peripheral or border portion 22 of the support plate 14 through the provision of a plurality of apertures 24 formed therein as demonstrated in Figure 1. The

individual links 20 and accordingly the remainder of the louver 10 may be formed from a variety of different materials. However, when formed from metal or other relatively heavy material the advantage of utilizing the retaining assembly of the present invention, including the support plate 14 and the retaining clip 16 is obviously beneficial, as set forth in greater detail ~~herein-after~~ hereinafter.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 16 line 1 with the following amended paragraph:

As set forth above, the support plate 14 is intended to be supported in a downwardly suspended relation ~~[[to]]~~ from the connecting portion 30 of a corresponding carrier assembly. As will be described in greater detail hereinafter with regard to various ones of the accompanying Figures, the structural features of the different types of connecting portions may vary. However, common to all, or at least a majority of the connecting portions are structural features which facilitate their supporting and preferably removable attachment to the support plate 14. To accomplish such removable attachment, the support plate 14 includes an outwardly extending mounting finger

generally indicated as 40. The mounting finger 40 also includes a mounting aperture 42 through which an engaging member of the ~~support~~ connecting portion 30, or other type of ~~support~~ connecting portion, at least partially passes. As such, the mounting aperture 42 may include grooves or channels 44 to accommodate the different structures of the connecting portions as will be further described.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 16 line 18 with the following amended paragraph:

Although not shown in all of the accompanying Figures, a most preferred embodiment of the support plate 14 includes the provision of a stabilizing assembly 46 including at least one but preferably two, spaced apart stop member 48 formed on at least one side surface, as at 26', of the body 26 and extending outwardly therefrom. Further, each of the stop members 48 are disposed immediately adjacent or contiguous to oppositely dispose peripheral portions of the mounting aperture 42. As such, the stop members 48 are disposed in spaced apart relation to one another a distance sufficient to permit the disposition there between of an engaging member 30' of the connecting

portion 30. For purposes of clarity, the positioning of the engaging member 30' of the connecting portion 30 is represented in phantom lines in Figure 9 and in full lines in Figure 11. It is again emphasized that the various connecting portions may very well be structurally distinguishable. Therefore regardless of its configuration, the engaging member 30' of the connecting portion 30 is disposable between and in contained relation to the stop members 48. However, the outward extension of the stop members 48 from the corresponding surface 26' and their close proximity to the periphery of the mounting aperture 42 eliminates or significantly restricts any undesirable lateral displacement between the engagement member 30' and the support plate 14 as well as the inadvertent detachment of the engaging member 30' from the mounting aperture 42. Such lateral displacement is undesirable in that it will further facilitate the inadvertent detachment of the support plate 14 and the remainder of the louver 10 from its intended suspended and supported position relative to the connecting portion 30 and its respective carrier assembly.

Please replace the paragraph beginning on page 18 line 17

with the following amended paragraph:

As further demonstrated, the retaining clip 16 also includes an interior surface 60 extending substantially continuously about the interior portions of the sides 50 and 52 as well as the bridge 54. As such, the interior surface 60 includes at least two surface segments 62 and 64. In order to further facilitate retaining engagement of the retaining clip 16 in at least partially surrounding and clamping engagement with any one of the connecting portions, such as at 30, the interior surface 60 and more specifically at least one of the surface segments 62 include a substantially recessed configuration as at 66. The recessed configuration 66 of the surface segment 62 is disposed, dimensioned and configured to receive at least one part of any one of the connecting portions with which it is used. As shown in Figure 13 the recessed configuration 66 receives an exposed part of the engaging member 30' on one side of the support plate 14. The recessed configuration 66 thereby further restricts inadvertent and undesirable lateral displacement of the retaining clip 16 relative to any of the connecting portions, to be described in greater detail hereinafter. In its operative position as shown in Figures 1

and 13, the opposite sides 50 and 52 are located on opposite sides of the connection portion 30, [[30']] as well as on opposite sides of the support plate 14 and specifically in clamping, sandwiching relation to the connecting portion 30 and the engaging member 30' associated therewith.